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Visual experiences in Cinquecento
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2019. xii + 204 pp. \$65

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framing Burchiello's verse within their own analyses, the translators encourage an appreciation of and engagement with the poetry's polysemantic structure and intentions.

This edition will be welcomed by scholars, students, and teachers of early modern literature, history, and culture, allowing access to little-encountered language and knowledge of the premodern urban environment, particularly in light of current scholarly inquiry into food studies, material and ludic culture, gender and sexuality, and health and the body. Burchiello's vivid and experimental voice will invigorate our understanding of fifteenth-century Florence, just as he did for his contemporaries and imitators.

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Visual Experiences in Cinquecento Theatrical Spaces. Javier Berzal de Dios.
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In the last few decades, many scholars have begun to challenge the lingering narrative of Vitruvian influence on perspective in Renaissance Italian staging. Rather than historicizing scenography through one unifying gaze, we must look for interconnected aesthetics and the experience of a plural audience. Scholarship has pivoted to the intersection of late medieval theatrical design and the dramaturgical conventions of the *sacra rappresentazione* as related to the Cinquecento interpretation of ancient theater.

In *Visual Experiences in Cinquecento Theatrical Spaces*, Javier Berzal de Dios raises the stakes of the Vitruvian shadow hovering over the historiography of Italian scenography by challenging the mythic authority of linear perspective and the generalizing of Renaissance illusionism in order to “disentangle the scholarly association of scenography with mathematics, visual coherence, and unity” (7). Berzal de Dios wants to give attention to the dynamic process of communication that scenography and the aesthetic program of theatrical built spaces may have had on audiences. The author attempts to reevaluate scholarship that relies on a privileged viewer—the prince's seat—and that historicizes the symmetry and unity of the theatrical experience around one noble point of view. In order to do this, Berzal de Dios emphasizes the “aesthetic function of pictorial displacements, visual anomalies, and architectural paradoxes” (7) in the scenographic program of a theatrical space in order to demonstrate that each seat in the theater would have been granted a distinct view of a Cinquecento theatrical dramaturgy unaffected by Vitruvian influence.

The book does what it sets out to do—“excavate what the scholarship has kept covered, consciously or unconsciously” (9). Berzal de Dios compares many differing claims on the myths of perspective and unity during this period, drawing particular attention

to how artists may have interpreted Aristotle's treatise or Vitruvian discourse in the first half of the sixteenth century. In four chapters, Berzal de Dios surveys primary and secondary sources, and even postmodern theory, in order to reexamine the relationship between architectural expression and theatrical viewership. Such varied topics include a focus on Baldassare Peruzzi's 1514 stage design for *La Calandria*, in chapter 1; the established practice of fictionalizing urban spaces in stage designs and the importance of scenography and audience engagement, in chapter 2; the performative aspects of theatrical spaces and the conditions of visibility in built theaters, in chapter 3; and, finally, to disentangle the political aspirations of the Medici family from the reality of theatrical productions, in chapter 4.

Berzal de Dios sets out to explore "resonances and dissonances" (6) rather than forced linear discourses set out by other historiographic methodologies. Yet the chronological organization of the book locates important discussions of the concepts of *apparato*, and the author's criteria for the etymology of *theater* itself, in chapter 3, when they might have been better served earlier. Once he offers a definition of *theatrum* borrowed from Cesare Cesariano—"the people's ability to see what is going on" (78)—we finally see why the stakes are so high for Berzal de Dios in chapter 1. Reimagining the reality of many points of view in a scenographic program democratizes the Cinquecento theatrical experience and emphasizes the pleasure of incongruity in the spectacle. Throughout his methodology, Berzal de Dios offers the reader vestiges of recent scholarship, primary sources, excerpted play scripts, and a catalogue of Renaissance exemplars, such as Peruzzi, Aristotle, Beccafumi, Vasari, and Riccio, who worked on important scenographic programs. At times, the body of the text becomes intermingled with postmodern commentary in the footnotes. Perhaps this suits the author's rhetorical strategy to displace a unified perspective on theories of viewership.

The book also includes a valuable collection of illustrations (eighteen in all), featuring scenographic designs for specific productions, built theaters, and exemplars based on Vitruvian models for comic, tragic, and pastoral models of scenography. Berzal de Dios offers excellent comparative discussions on the illustrations that work well to demonstrate the book's overall thesis—when it comes to the stage, spectators engage with a play of semblances and recognizable buildings, not a mimetic ideal. Berzal de Dios's emphasis on disunity in scenography reminds us that a city that appears on stage is not always a representation of the truth. Urban spaces condensed on the stage might imply an idealized locale, but we need to be looking at the stage with a different point of view. Berzal de Dios's study reminds us that built environments on the Cinquecento stage were ephemeral, made for plural audiences, and meant to celebrate irregular viewpoints.

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